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Prison Education in Scotland: A Preliminary Study of Young Offenders Institutions (YOIs)

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1. Introduction

- **This seminar will cover the following issues:**
 - The problem: education in prison ‘still’ at the back of the class.
 - Need for the research
 - Analytical framework
 - Prison education research: paradoxes, tensions and contestations
 - Prison education in Scotland – situational and policy context
 - The research

2. The problem: education in prisons 'still' at the back of the class

- **Does prison (education) work? or inversely, 'Is Prison (education) working?**
 - Well rehearsed question in prison research.
- **The book: *Can Prisons Work?* (2000)**
 - Stephen Duguid wrestle with the paradox of corrections-sanctioned rehabilitation
 - Tensions and structural constraints inherent in prison rehabilitation programs such as education
 - How transformation can and does occur within prisons.
 - Tensions between prison personnel and external agencies offering higher education
 - Extent to which a humanities education, for example, can provide rehabilitation to inmates.

- **Rehabilitative programmes across the Western world (USA, Australia and Scotland, UK)**
 - Duguid finds consistency of correctional thought and similarity of epistemic trajectory in our understanding of the purpose of prison and whether prison (education) works?
- **In UK a raft of policies on how best to rehabilitate prisoners exist**
 - “Education should be at the heart of the prison system” (see Coates, p. i)
 - However, despite rhetoric prison education *remains* at the back of the class (Allison and Sloan, 2015).

- **2013/14 Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) report**
 - Over 50% prisons inspected required improvement (Ofsted, 2014).
- **Report by Prison Reform Trust on prison education**
 - One key issue prisoners recommended for change was the need for “more resources “ (PRT, 2003, p. 59).
- **2016 review of education in UK prisons inspected in terms of 'effectiveness' reveals:**
 - (a) 2 excellent
 - (b) 9 outstanding
 - (c) 27 required improvement
 - (d) 7 inadequate
- **In addition**
 - “Three fifths of [UK] prisoners leave prison without an identified employment or education or training outcome” (Coates, 2016, p. i).
- **Calls to overall prison education**
 - If prisons are ever to be able to tackle recidivism, and make inmates more employable (see BBC News, 2015; Coates, 2016).

- **Caution - Mixed evidence**

- On the effectiveness of restorative programmes in reducing re-offending (Sapouna et al, 2015)
 - In the discourse (published research)
 - Unpublished scholarly reports
 - Government pronouncements and reports
- Media reportage (sensational reporting evident)
- Issues in Scotland, for example,
 - Offenders under the age of 21 have the highest rate of recidivism (BBC, 2015)
 - » In Scotland re-offending rate for young offenders - 59%
 - Promising reporting that overall reconviction rates is declining, for example, by 0.6% - from 28% to 28.3% between 2012-13 and 2013-14 (SPS, 2016).
- Why the reoffending rates in Scotland declining?
 - Scottish government 'special fund (2012-2015) to the tune of £9.5 million that was used to develop and mentor persistent offenders (Audit Scotland, 2014).

3. Need for the Research

- **UK-Wide research**

- Published research in Prison education remains a fertile area of research.
- Some published research in England and Wales (see Reuss, 1999; Czerniawski, 2015).

- **Unpublished reports in Scotland**

- **Prison Education is the form of**

- Unpublished reports such as those commissioned by the Scottish Government,
- Undertaken by Prison Reform Trust (PRT
- Annual self-reported reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) – all which provide important information (PRT, 2003; HMIPS, 2015; Sapouna, 2015).

- **Scotland**

- **An exhaustive literature search of bibliographies**

- To date prison education in Scotland has not been subjected to published empirical research (Education Scotland, nd).

- **Scotland - Devolved Status**

- Jurisdiction over Crime and Justice, including management of prisons
- Scottish 'uniqueness' provides rationale to understand the Scottish scenario in terms of published on prison education.
- How Scotland responds to prisoner needs as way of dealing with the persistent problem of recidivism.
 - Especially among young offenders (16-21 years old)

- **Important to understand a number of pertinent issues about Scotland:**

- Extent and quality of educational provision in prisons,
- Inmates' engagement (or not) with and experience of prison education,
- Who teachers in prison and their experiences of a prison teaching and learning environment,
- How prison staff manage education, including resources available, time allocation within the wider 'purposeful activity' programme ,
- *What works (and doesn't) and how to motivate and improve learning in prison?*

4. Analytical Framework – Realist Evaluation

- ***Realist Evaluation***

- Developed in England by Pawson (1989) and Pawson and Tilley (1997) and adopted by Duguid and Pawson (1998).
- Offers tools to explore suppositions behind (educational) programmes being evaluated
- It highlights theories, ideas and practices that can help explain why such programmes succeed or fail.
- These theories, ideas and practices are drawn from the experience of connected with the programmes concerned such as:
 - Instructional leaders (prison management),
 - Practitioners (teachers and prison staff),
 - Participants (prison inmates),
 - Policymakers (government officials)
- The core principle of realist evolution is the attempt to discover what works and why, for whom and in what circumstances (Duguid and Pawson, 1998).

5. Prison education research: paradoxes, tensions and contestations

- **Paradox of provision**
 - Due to conflicting interests and ideologies between the education and penal systems.
- **Need for prison education to appease different audiences**
 - Prison management, prisoners, government officials, educational providers, politicians and the public outside prisons. (Duguid and Pawson, 2000)
- **Prison Education – a contested terrain**
 - Mainly between ‘optimistic’ and ‘pessimistic’ scholars and theorists on the purpose of prison (Ubah, 2003).
 - *Optimistic theory*: education as rehabilitative and a change agent for good – prison education works.
 - *Pessimistic theory*: anti-thesis of the rehabilitative ideal – prison education does not work.

- **Transformative/prisoners can not change**
 - Education is transformative and catalyst for change against the view that hardened criminals can never change (Duguid and Pawson, 1998).
- **Tool for living/tool of control**
 - Education necessary for living against the view prison education 'deprives offenders of freedom and facilitate order and control' (Wilson, 2000, 174).
- **Self selection/mechanistic**
 - Self-selection of motivated success-bound prisoners in explaining outcomes of education focusing on measurable results to meet institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (Wilson, 2000; Duguid and Pawson, 1998)

- **Recidivism/empowerment**

- Education offered against rates of recidivism to determine success as opposed to radical interpretation of education as a form of empowerment (Reus and Wilson, 2000).

- **Kill time/rehabilitation**

- Prison education seen as a 'security risk', a way of keeping prisoners 'occupied', to 'soften a harsh prison regime', a 'way of passing time' against the view that prison education is a vehicle for prisoner rehabilitation and reformation (Reuss and Wilson, 2000).

- **Punishment/Human Rights/public safety**

- Prison is for punishment
- Education a privilege not a right for the undeserved paid for by taxpayers
- Formal education for all should be protected as issue of Human Rights .
- Help prisoners' actualise their potential for living crime-free lives
- Contributes to public safety for benefit of all citizens (Reuss and Wilson, 2000; Thomas and Murray, 2008).

- **Cost/benefit**

- Keeping law breakers locked up is very expensive (in UK cost per prisoner is £33, 785)
 - Interventions (such as education) that empower prisoners with skills to help them stay away from crime is the most effective way of using public funds (Thomas and Murray, 2008).

- **Choice /control**

- Effective education enables prisoners a level of choice and control to what they want to learn
- Against the notion that courses provided in prisons tend to serve the interests of prison management and not prisoners (Reuss and Wilson, 2000).

- **Basic skills/employability skills**

- Emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills instead of a holistic approach that goes beyond these basic competencies, to include 'employable practical skills (Duguid and Pawson, 2000).

- **Issues of general agreement in the discourse**
 - Less dispute in the discourse regarding ‘barriers’ to education in prison (see Czerniawski, 2015; Farley and Pike, 2016; Westreheim and Manger, 2014):
 - Dispositional barriers
 - Disadvantaged childhood,
 - Previous negative experience of education,
 - Lack of self esteem by inmates,
 - Drug and alcohol problems,
 - Mental illness,
 - Communication problems (i.e. learning difficulties – diagnosed and undiagnosed)
 - Effects of prisonisation (negative values of prison sub-culture)
 - Boredom and isolation
 - Conflicts with staff
 - Concerns about one’s safety
 - Serious prison misbehaviour and violence

- Institutional factors

- Shortage of resources (materials and staffing),
- Weak teaching
- Pedagogical inappropriateness and lack of knowledge and understanding of skills and practices required to work in prisons
 - » Due to the fact teachers in prisons have never received specific prison education in their initial teacher training programmes.
- Absence of further professional training such as CPD (Continuing Professional Development) for teachers.
- Lack of appropriately trained staff and as a result weak teaching,
- Limited curriculum offer in terms of both level and content – problem of focusing too much on basic literary and numeracy.
- Overcrowding and limited availability for learning of essential resources for learning (i.e. computers)
- Transfer of prisoners at short notice which disrupts their learning.
- Lack of learning support and cultural support
- Reductions on funding on both corrections and of education – put pressure on prisons to offer cheaper and mainly shorter ‘measureable’ programmes
- Absence of reinforcements and incentives to learn
- Failure to take prisoners’ complaints and requests seriously.

6. Prison education in Scotland: Situational and policy context

- **Scottish Prison Service (SPS)**
 - In Scotland prisons are managed by the Scottish Prison Service, an agency of the Scottish Government
 - Under a Chief Inspector of Prisons.
- **Highest Rates of Imprisonment in Europe**
 - Along with Wales and England, Scotland has one of the highest rates of imprisonment in Europe per head per population.
- **Re-offending rates for young people offenders**
 - In Scotland, re-offending rates is highest for young offenders (16-21 years old)
 - 53% re-offend after two years.
 - Young offenders largely reluctant to participate in ‘purposeful activity’, including education and preferring to watch TV instead.
- **Prison population across the UK, including Scotland**

Region	Population (2015)	Prisoners
England and Wales	55 Million – England 3.1 Million – Wales	85400 (2016)
Northern Ireland	1.9 Million	1836 (2014)
Scotland	5.4 Million (2015)	7872 (2016)

- **Annual budget**
 - SPS receives an annual budget of £382.3 Million of which £18 Million is spent on ‘purposeful activities’ including education (SPS, 2014).
- **Prison population in Scotland (2016):**
 - Male sentenced: 5551
 - Female sentenced: 266
 - Young offenders female – sentenced: 17
 - Young offenders male – sentenced: 264
- **Number of prisons in Scotland**
 - 15 prisons in Scotland: 13 public and 2 private.

Prison	Public	Additional Status
Corton Vale -Stirling	Public	Women/Young Offenders Institution (YOIs)
Dumfries - Dumfries	Public	
Edinburgh - Edinburgh	Public	Some women
Glenochil - Tullibody	Public	
Greenock - Greenock	Public	Some Women
Inverness - Inverness	Public	
Polmont - Falkirk	Public	Young Offenders Institution (YOIs)
Low Moss - Bishopbriggs	Public	
Perth - Perth	Public	
Shotts - Shotts	Public	
Addiewell - Addiewell	Private	Sodexo Justice Services
Kilmarnock - Hurlford	Private	Serco
Grampian - Peterhead	Public	HMP and Young Offenders Institution (YOIs) and some women
Castle Huntly - Longforgan	Public	

- **Interesting policy detail**

- From a policy context, SPS has no statutory duty to rehabilitate prisoners (Ross, 2012).
- SPS however does recognise the importance of rehabilitation.
 - Encourages prisoners to take opportunities which will reduce the likelihood to re-offend and help them reintegrate them back into their community.

- **Purposeful activity**

- Prison education underpinned by a nation-wide initiative known as 'purposeful activity' (HMIP, 2015).
 - Scheme that encourages all prisoners to use their time in prison constructively

- **Provision of education in prisons**

- Provision of prison education in Scotland is 'contracted out' and currently offered by two national learning providers (non-degree providers) (Scottish Parliament, 2013).
 - Carnegie College
 - Motherwell College

- **Courses typically offered**

- Education subjects: Arts programme, literacy and numeracy
- Vocational training: bricklaying, painting, decorating, hairdressing/barbering, cleaning etc.

7. Proposed Research

- ***Objectives of the research***

- To appraise the nature and extent of provision of prison education in young offenders' institutions.
- To identify and assess the quality of resources used in the provision of prison education in young offenders' institutions.
- To critically examine Scottish young offenders' engagement with prison education.
- To explore the prison lived experience of Scottish young offenders and assess the impact of the prison environment on offender learning.
- To critically explore ways in which prison education in young offenders' institutions in Scotland could be improved.

- ***Research Questions***

- *What works (and doesn't) and how to motivate and improve learning in YOIs?*

- What is the nature and extent of provision of prison education in young offenders' institutions in Scotland?
- What resources (human and material) are available for prison education in young offenders' institutions in Scotland? What is the quality of these resources? In what ways do these resources facilitate or hinder offender learning?
- How do young offenders' engage with prison education? If, at all, are there gender differences in the way male and females young offenders engage with prison education, and why?
- What is the nature of prison life for young offenders? If at all, how does the prison environment impact on offender learning?
- What should be done to improve learning for young offenders in Scotland?

8. Way Forward

- **Phase 1: Preliminary study**
 - Undertake the proposed research between October 2016 and July 2017.
- **Phase 2: Expand the research to include data from adult prison**
 - Aim is to provide a published account of the state and status of prison education in Scotland
 - Provide a holistic picture of prison education in Scotland on the question: 'Does prison education work?'
 - Aim to complete the research between 2017-2019
 - adult prisoners (including men and women)
- **Recommendation/ambition – professionalization of prison education**
 - Key recommendation – need to formalise prison education within teacher education
 - Through my research unit interest my university to offer professional graduate diploma in education specialising in teaching in prisons
 - Approach the GTCS for recognition of the new qualification as a new area for teacher professional registration.

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